



---

# U.S. Beef Cow-Calf Herds

Bob L. Larson, DVM, PhD

Kansas State University  
Manhattan, Kansas

# DESCRIPTION OF THE U.S. CATTLE HERD

- 92 million head of cattle and calves (2016)
  - 913,246 farms
  - 30 million beef cows
  - 9.3 million dairy cows
  - 6.3 million beef replacement heifers
  - 3.9 million dairy replacement heifers
  - 2.1 million bulls
  - 25.5 million feedlot cattle per year

# DESCRIPTION OF THE U.S. CATTLE HERD

- 90 million head of cattle and calves
  - 913,246 farms
  - 30 million beef cows
  - 9.3 million dairy cows
  - 6.3 million beef replacement heifers
  - 3.9 million dairy replacement heifers
  - 2.1 million bulls
  - 25.5 million feedlot cattle per year
- Beef cattle are present in every state in the U.S. with numbers and production type strongly influenced by land prices, forage productivity and quality, feed cost, and presence of processing and production infrastructure.
- The U.S. has many farms with less than 50 head of cattle, but most of the production is from farms with greater than 100 head of cattle

# DESCRIPTION OF THE U.S. CATTLE HERD

- Some of the factors that influence the U.S. beef cattle industry include:
  - High land prices
  - High labor prices
  - Low feed prices
  - Excellent system of rivers, railroads, & highways
  - Low cost of technology
  - A variety of climates

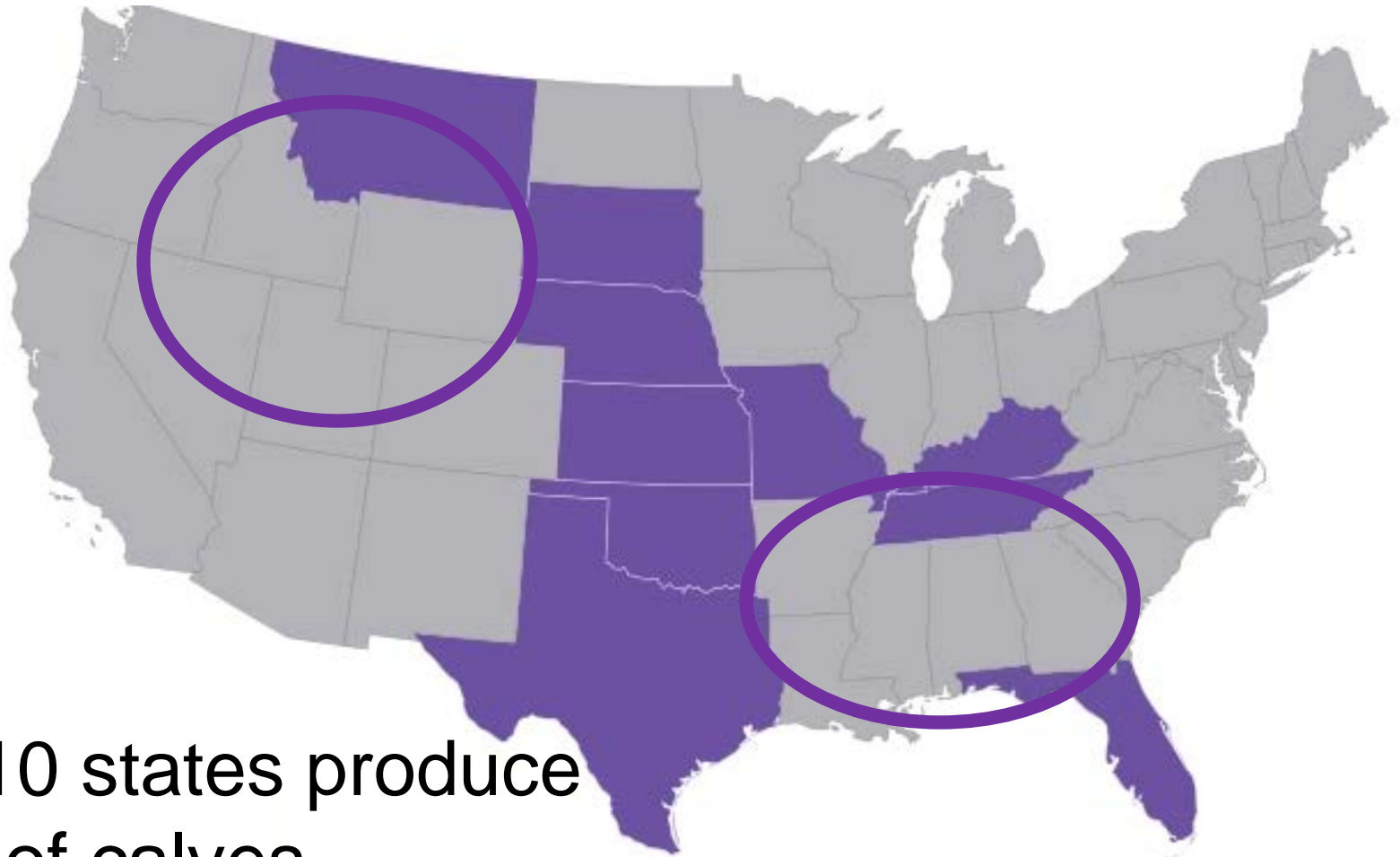
# DESCRIPTION OF THE U.S. CATTLE HERD



[http://www.amcharts.com/visited\\_states/#](http://www.amcharts.com/visited_states/#)

# DESCRIPTION OF THE U.S. CATTLE HERD

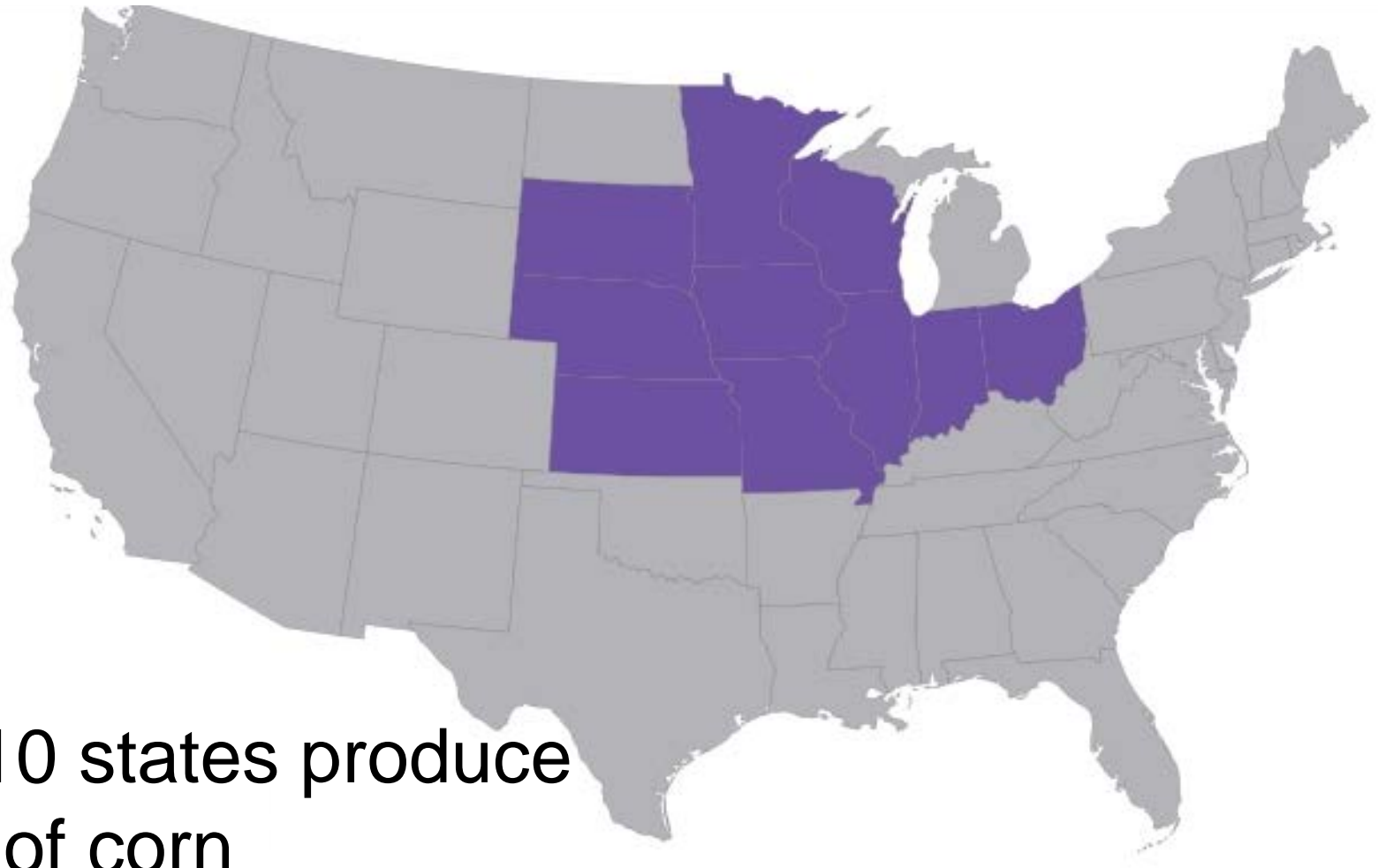
Cow-calf production is predominant in areas with relatively low land prices and good forage production.



Top 10 states produce  
59% of calves

# DESCRIPTION OF THE U.S. CATTLE HERD

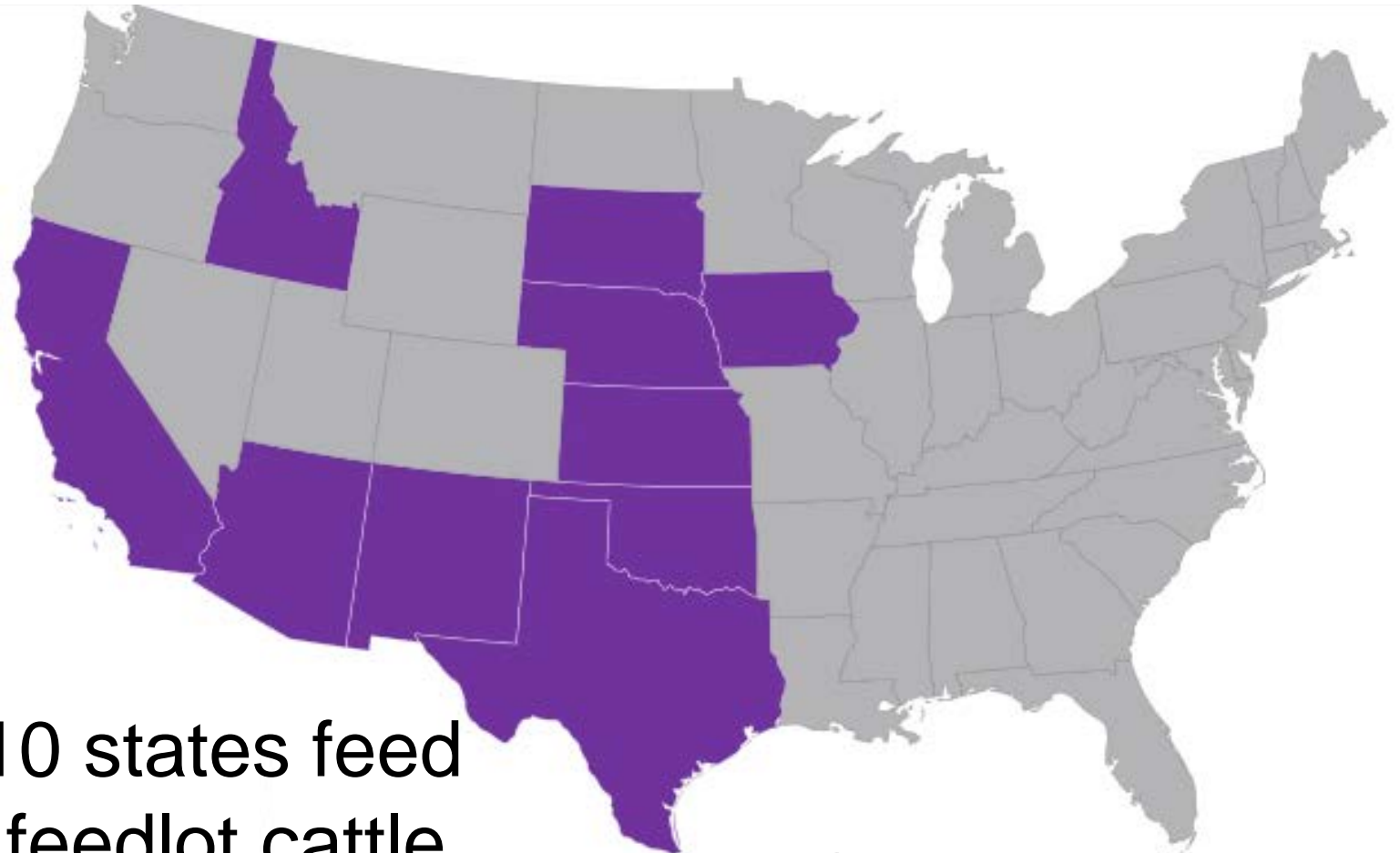
Feed production is predominant in areas with high land prices and abundant rainfall or irrigation.



Top 10 states produce  
84% of corn

# DESCRIPTION OF THE U.S. CATTLE HERD

Feedlot production is predominant in areas with low rainfall, low land prices, and good access to feed grains.



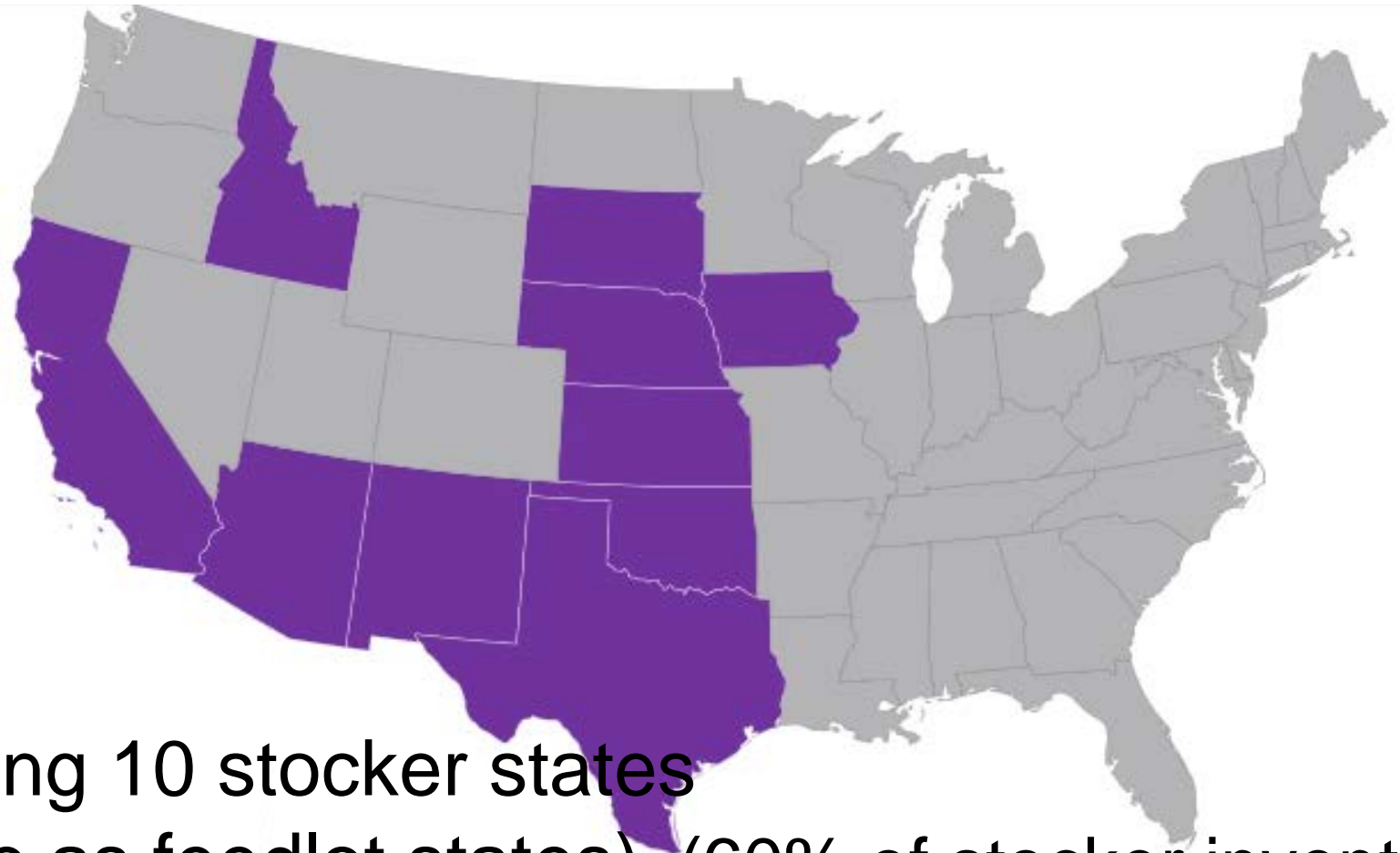
Top 10 states feed  
95% feedlot cattle

(TX, NE, KS feed 66% of cattle)



# DESCRIPTION OF THE U.S. CATTLE HERD

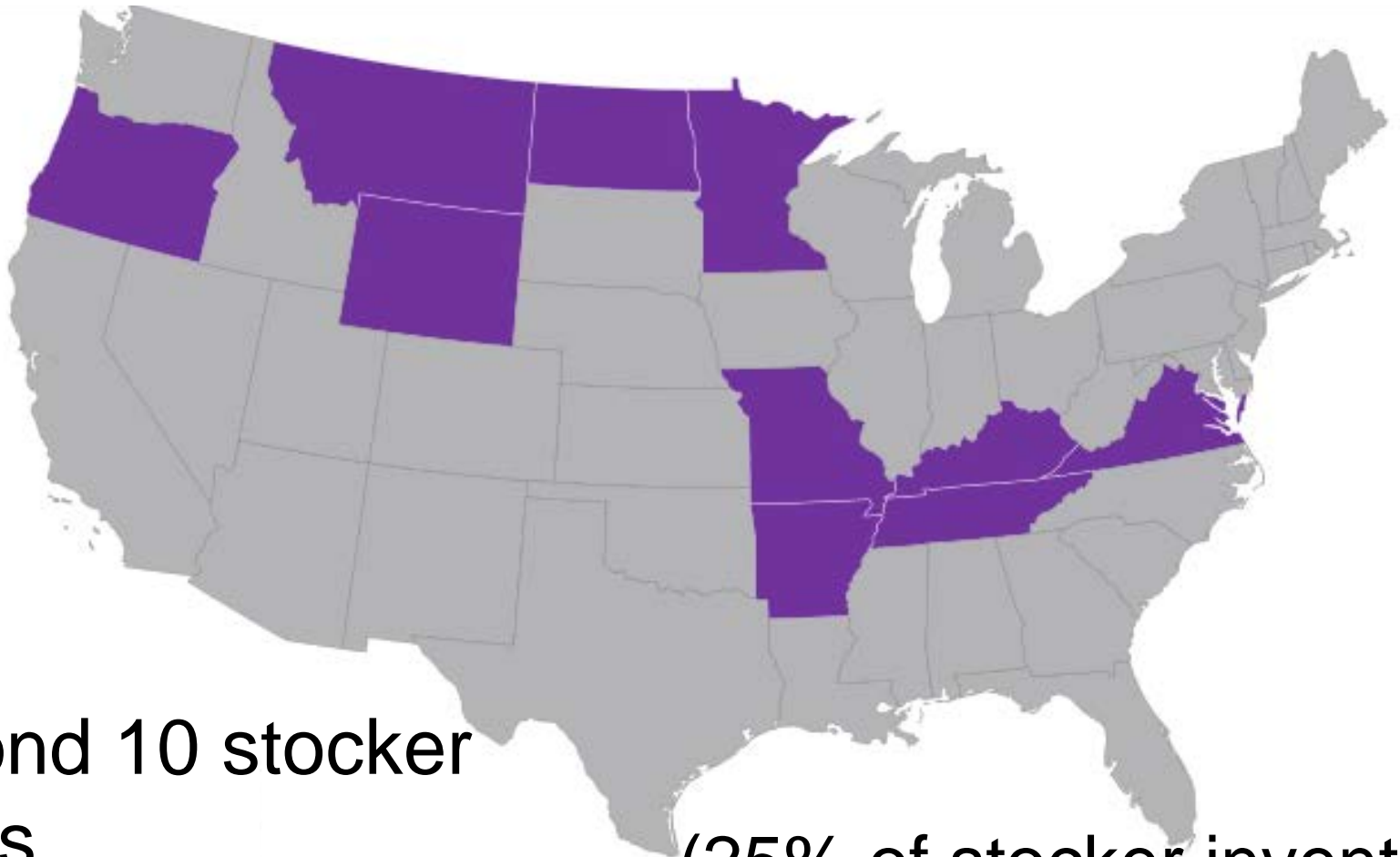
Stocker cattle production is predominant in areas with access to forage / feed, near sources of feeder cattle, & near feedlots



Leading 10 stocker states  
(same as feedlot states) (60% of stocker inventory)

# DESCRIPTION OF THE U.S. CATTLE HERD

Stocker cattle production is predominant in areas with access to forage / feed, near sources of feeder cattle, & near feedlots

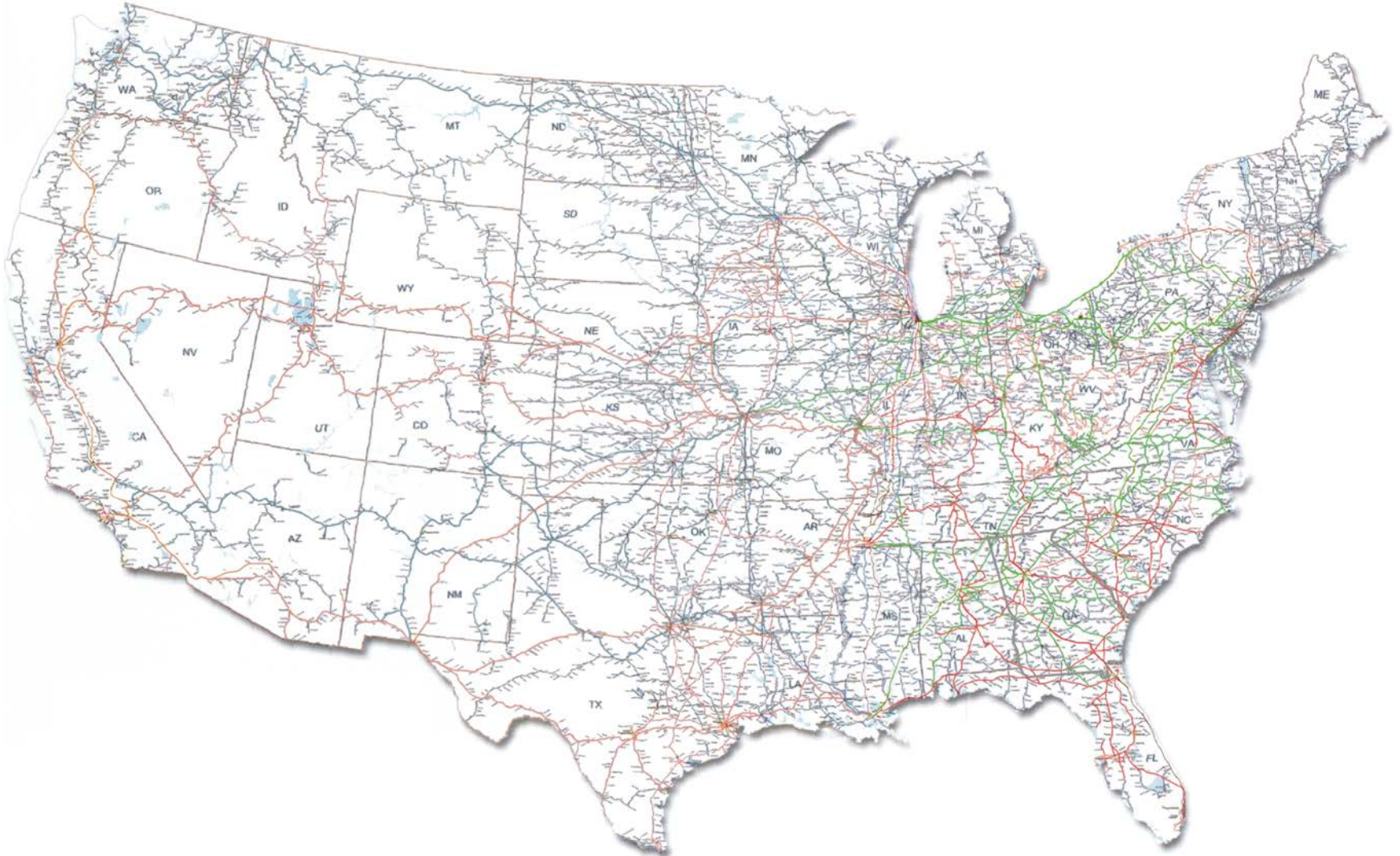


Second 10 stocker  
states

(25% of stocker inventory)

# Transportation Infrastructure Allows Fast / Inexpensive Movement of Cattle and Feed

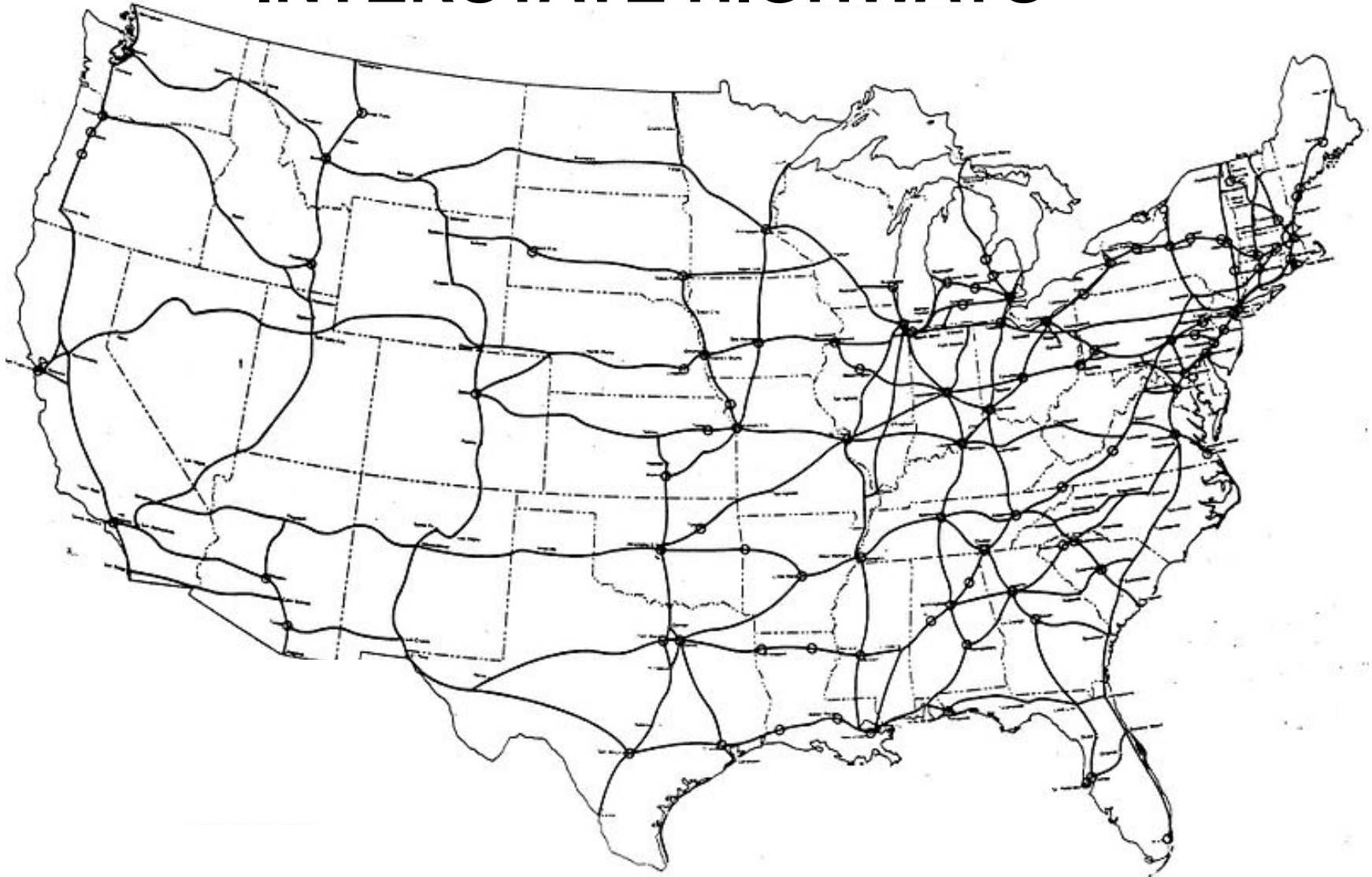
## **NATIONAL RAILWAY SYSTEM**





# Transportation Infrastructure Allows Fast / Inexpensive Movement of Cattle and Feed

## **INTERSTATE HIGHWAYS**



# Transportation Infrastructure Allows Fast / Inexpensive Movement of Cattle and Feed

## NAVIGABLE WATERWAYS



# DESCRIPTION OF THE U.S. CATTLE HERD

- Because different production sectors are optimized in different geographic locations, the U.S. beef industry tends to involve several owners in several different locations over time for each beef producing animal.
- From an animal health perspective, the U.S. system is challenged by a high frequency of commingling of cattle from multiple sources and transporting cattle sometimes long distances between production segments.

# HEALTH CHALLENGES OF U.S. CATTLE HERD

- Cow-Calf
  - Extensive, Outdoor Environment:
    - Parasites (external and internal)
    - Endemic disease (often with insect vector)
    - Weather extremes
    - Diet variability (forage variability)

# HEALTH CHALLENGES OF U.S. CATTLE HERD

- Cow-Calf
  - Extensive, Outdoor Environment:
- Stocker
  - Extensive / Mod Confinement, Outdoor Environment:
    - Parasites (external and internal)
    - Dz associated with commingling (novel exposure / stress)
    - Weather extremes



# HEALTH CHALLENGES OF U.S. CATTLE HERD

- Cow-Calf
  - Extensive, Outdoor Environment:
- Stocker
  - Extensive / Mod Confinement, Outdoor Environment:
- Feedlot
  - Mod Confinement, Outdoor Environment:
    - Dz associated with commingling (novel exposure / stress)
    - Weather extremes



- In 1982 the average age of farm principal operators was 50.5 years old and in 2012 it was 58.3 years old
- But, the relative rate of farm principal operator aging is essentially the same as that of the general workforce.

